

Testimony of Jeffrey Partridge, Ph.D.
Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
February 16, 2016
Subject: Governor's proposed FY 2016-17 budget revisions

Greetings. My name is Dr. Jeffrey Partridge, Chair of Humanities and English Professor at Capital Community College. I serve on the CT Humanities Board of Trustees, where I co-chair the Application Review Committee (ARC). ARC reviews applications and makes recommendations to the entire CTH board regarding the specific distribution of humanities council funds on behalf of the State of Connecticut to applicant organizations seeking to plan and implement humanities programming.

My testimony is intended to supply first-hand knowledge of the re-granting process administered by CT Humanities in order to advance the following argument: that whereas the governor's proposal calls for the establishment of a competitive process to award state money to arts and humanities organizations, CT Humanities already acts on behalf of the state in exactly this manner and therefore should not only continue to receive full funding from the legislature but should also stand as a model of responsible and effective administration of state funding for heritage and arts programming.

CT Humanities is a re-granting organization that acts on behalf of the State of Connecticut to judge the merits of applications by hundreds of Connecticut museums, libraries, historical societies, and arts organizations and to award money to the best proposals through a competitive process in order to introduce important humanities content, encourage civic discussion, and advance literacy among diverse communities in all regions of Connecticut.

As co-chair of ARC for the past two years, I have had the responsibility and privilege of facilitating quarterly discussions on the merits of applications with a team of experts in the

museum, library, and heritage fields in order to distribute state funds to programming that shows the highest merits and greatest possibility of impacting civic dialog and critical engagement among the diverse citizens of this state.

CT Humanities awards grants of state money on a monthly basis in small “Quick Grants” of up to \$4,999 each that are assessed by members of our expert CT Humanities staff and approved by the executive committee, and in larger planning and implementation grants of up to \$50,000 that are assessed by ARC and voted on by the entire board.

ARC is made up of several board members with expertise in the humanities and a large pool of practitioner experts from museums, libraries, and historical societies representing all regions of the state. Each planning and implementation application is reviewed by a CTH staff member and by all ARC members involved in a particular review (a team of 8-10 experts). The committee then meets in person to discuss each application, beginning with a detailed review by a member of the committee and extending to a facilitated discussion on the merits of the applications and a vote to rate the application. Criteria for each application include quality of humanities content, strength of expert and scholarly underpinning, ability to reach broad audiences, viability of budget, and other factors. Once all applications are ranked according to their merits, the committee considers the amount of money available for the particular round of applications and sets a bar that would allow the funding of as many high scoring applications as possible. The recommendations then go forward to the CTH board for a vote, following which all applicant organizations are contacted by CTH staff with a report on the outcome of applications, including a summary of the merits and shortcomings identified by ARC.

I appeal to the legislature to continue to fund CT Humanities in full in order to allow the humanities council to responsibly administer state dollars in the most effective way to impact our

state with programming grounded in history, literary arts, and other vital humanities disciplines to strengthen our state's civic and critical engagement and to provide needed literacy interventions for our diverse populations. CT Humanities is vital to the distribution of state monies through a responsible programming review to hundreds of organizations throughout the state who rely on state funding to impact our citizens with significant humanities programming.

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